Ronald V. Dellums at the People's Convention (1984)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfl9UGxfyYA (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfl9UGxfyYA)

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Representative Ronald Dellums spoke at the Peoples Convention, an alternative to the Democratic National Convention.

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talking about Central America the Middle East South Africa our people are dying here man well Mourinho last year was working applying methyl bromide to a field that was to be planted in strawberries in the third year accumulating that methyl bromide he got knocked off the tractor almost died over the weekend he's totally disabled has frequent seizures and in a high dosage of dilantin his wife didn't fare very well she died last year she was 39 years old with an enlarged liver and suspicion of the doctors is accumulation of those pesticides my father died in nineteen eighty and he also died from the symptoms of a long life of accumulating those chemicals and the only thing that our government has the goal to do is haul call hearings around the country to

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haul call hearings around the country to see if they are going to implement the national standard for having bathroom facilities and washrooms in the fields to wash our hands to have a toilet on the worksite it is a disgrace to our families to our children to the women to be seeking the nearest cornfield the nearest woods in the nearest ditch to have to go to the bathroom and talk about sexual harassment where I've seen my little sisters of my family have to go into the field of corn and then to find them coming crying from there because the growers kids were spying on them those are not humane working conditions well you see this is why we went on strike over 2,000 of us walked out of the fields and what is now has been the largest agricultural strike in the history of the Midwest we've been on strike since 1978 this summer will be our sixth season of picketing those tomato fields and we haven't done it with a great amount of opposition the first people to come out and try to break the strike with the growers vigilante groups when the growers couldn't break the strike they put pressure on the sheriff of the county with the strike originated to do something about us well he did a lot of things but the worst thing he did when we approached a field of farm workers

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we approached a field of farm workers who were a half a mile away from the road we asked how we could communicate with those workers because we went to the labor camp the grower had a German police dog running on a line back and forth so no one could get in or out without being inspected by the labor contractor who promptly would come out with a pistol so we said we have a right to talk to those workers so we took seven eight hundred workers to a picket line in front of that field and did an act of civil disobedience and marched into the field and sat down with those workers until they all walked out the sheriff the sheriff managed to come and arrest 27 of us after the after it was or but 27 us were still in the field and the sheriff arrested us took us to jail while we were in a holding pen behind the jail the sheriff came out while we were

talking to our attorney who wasn't even a Mexican he was a nice Irish guy from Cleveland who came down to be our staff lawyer wanting to arrest our lawyer on a traffic violation not only arrest him but bring him into custody when our lawyer told him he had to be crazy the sheriff said to his deputies to jump him for deputies and a farmer jumped him and beat our attorney John Kilroy unconscious all he was left it splattered in a pool of blood in front of over 40 witnesses including two lawyers two priests five Roman Catholic nuns they dragged him into the jail and after he was hospitalized the neurologist informed us that they had fractured his skull caused him cranial

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fractured his skull caused him cranial nerve damage and to this day that attorney is still disabled we sued that chair from the federal court a case it was litigated for more than four years while it was being litigated a cup four of his his deputies got nervous and told him that they were no longer going to cover up for him so the shirt fired them those four deputies hired a lawyer suit the sheriff for wrongful firing the sheriff got rid of that lawyer by burning his house down and running him out of the state that lawyer has hired another attorney to sue the sheriff for that then there was a grand jury indictment where that Sheriff was indicted on 27 counts 11 other felonies he whitewashed all those charges by running all the witnesses out of the state the state appointed a special prosecutor to investigate that Sheriff the special prosecutor couldn't find a single witness to testify against a chef for neck kind because everybody feared him and they told us what are you Mexicans going to do against that Sheriff a grand jury couldn't do nothing his own deputies couldn't do nothing a special prosecutor couldn't do nothing well I said well maybe we can't do nothing but I'll tell you what we were getting arrested and beat up before the strike and now we're getting arrested and beat up because we're in the strike at least now happening for a good reason we just won that case in January not only did we win the case we got a permanent injunction against that Sheriff to stay at least 35 feet away

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Sheriff to stay at least 35 feet away from any organized or any member any picutre in that county so now when the sheriff couldn't break the strike they brought in the Ku Klux Klan burned across in front of our fuel headquarters shotgun blasted out the windows of our office in that County and their favorite trick will take the internal organs of farm animals or the sex organs of the farm animals and stake the bloody mess with the front doors of people that supported us in that county to intimidate them to keep them from coming to meetings but the people still kept coming to meetings and now the latest way of attacking us you know there aren't a whole lot of laws in this country that protect the farm workers outside of California and even now Cesar has announced that the LRA is dead and we're going back to the streets and back to the boycott the latest tool that they're using to fight us campbell soups main argument is that they're not the employers or the farm workers because they use this medieval system of crop contracting to wash their hands of any responsibility that people who do the work on the bottom of the industry they're saying they point the finger to the growers that contract to grow the tomatoes and the pickles for them well now the growers are saying they're not the employers either last year in a federal court ruling a precedent a girl was found innocent of mass violations of child labor because the judge says we are now sharecroppers we're independent contractors self-employed so now we can

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contractors self-employed so now we can forget about child labor standards minimum wage standards Social Security and anything that has existed the minimal things to protect us that's they're using that knowledge of defense to keep us from filing workman's compensation claims in those two states but you know we all know where that system of sharecropping came from and I think that this was brings us together with a whole new dimension of people to be involved in the struggle you see when the Civil War was then that over a hundred years ago the slave owners had to come up with a new system to keep them folks and the plantations without calling them slaves so they invented this crop contracting sharecropping arrangement and kept the people on the plantation to keep exploiting them so I'm telling you that the Civil War never ended the only the

only thing that was ended in those years was the financial fight between the financial interests of the industrial north and agricultural South they sell their problems but the poor people kept on suffering the people still kept getting exploited and those things that came out of that oppression were the things that we're being fought in the civil rights movement the movements that we have today we're fighting still the consequences of that system of oppression and repression so

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system of oppression and repression so now in agriculture in the Midwest anyway they're not black folk doing that work there the Mexican folk that guess that makes us the new in this country so when you in that situation the only thing we know what learned how to do it's a figure out a way to regain some kind of spirit as a human being because it's not easy to watch your mother to watch your little sisters your little brothers thinking suffering to become a statistic it is no wonder why among farmworker women the miscarriage rate is 125 percent higher than the rest of the female population that the infant mortality rate is seven times higher than the national average that our life expectancy is 49 years lower for our members the 17 members in our organization that have passed away in the last seven years their average age was 39 years and then the British Broadcasting Company documents two summers ago that forty percent of the workforce in those pickles and tomato fields are children under 15 years of age we're asking for Americans to stand up again and not only to eliminate the people from a suffering situation but

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people from a suffering situation but eliminate the system altogether and finally in the Civil War we've gotten a big education to know who the enemy is the enemy is just not campbell soup while we're at campbell soup is a mechanism of the real oppressor when we started looking at who campbell soup us you know campbell soup really is campbell soup is the Philadelphia National Bank the philadelphia international bank the bank of new jersey the Prudential Insurance Company the Ford Motor Company these are the people with the controlling stock in that company Morgan guaranty trust they are the same people whose directors control the financial centers that monopolize our lives and those of other people who are being oppressed in Latin America the reason campbell soup is threatened with us eliminating their crop contracting and sharecropping system is because it opens the door to something phenomenal we are only going to be organizing 3,000 workers in a contract with Campbell Soup if you help us with the boycott but Heinz hunt Stokely VanCamp delmonte all the major food processors in this country have operations in the Midwest when you total up the workers working under that crop contracting and sharecropping system you're talking about sixty to eighty thousand farm workers that are being

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thousand farm workers that are being enslaved by that system of sharecropping and crop contracting and because these most of these workers are migrant workers can you imagine a group of organized of sixty to eighty thousand farmworkers migrating back to their home states in Texas and Florida some of you have asked when is cesar chavez going to get out of California while we are the organizing committee that is breaking that ground to establish at National Union of farmworkers so these financial interests and they are the same financial interests that control the citrus groves of Florida and Texas and the vegetables in South Florida and Texas the same financial interests we are going to cut off their oppressive system around the country and that is not going to be that is not going to be enough we have to develop our vision to include within our ranks within our movement those farm workers that are struggling against the same companies in Canada and Mexico in Guatemala in Belize and other parts of the world where the same companies and the same financial interests are pressing the same people that do the same jobs that we do in this country campbell soup is in town tomorrow morning they heard about our that we're doing something at the Democratic convention next week so we got the word last night that they're coming in to put some heavy pressure on the leadership of the National Democratic Party we just learned today that they're going to be offering them some money

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they're beginning to throw money all over the place I got calls from the National Council of La Raza I've got calls from the Texas migrant console from all the groups to deal with the farm worker issues in the Midwest offering them 70 80 150 130 thousand dollars a shot let them spend their money we're still going to boycott I want to leave you with I want to leave you with one thought you know a lot of people tell us jeez how can you people fight for so long how can you people think you're going to win against these big money people well you know the issue is not whether we got more money than them but whether we have that spirit of struggle this is going to outlast the money they're going to be willing to spend on us and cesar chavez put put it more eloquently i think that anyone can put it he said well you know these big companies they got money now mr. ron back or mr. O'Brien from the campbell soup company will be the ones coming in town tomorrow now they probably flew in their first class they're probably staying in the nicest hotel in town that probably eat the nicest meals I mean all that is going to take some money and they got some and we don't have that but

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they got some and we don't have that but somehow we managed to get from Ohio to here with the help of our friends we get a meal in their homes sleep in their homes is not costing us anything only thing it's costing us is our time so the real contest is between the time that we're investing and the that they're investing and you tell us what there's a lot more of time or money and my knees got to run out before time and that's all we're going to win bootcut bootcut bootcut merica Kilauea thank you velasquez they have people coming from Vermont to San Francisco for the convention in San Francisco the hotels are going to be full but we have our own coming to the people's convention I'm talking about the United States congressman or Ronald Elam's delam

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brothers and sisters of the deus and brothers and sisters of the people's convention it's a special pleasure and a privilege for me to address you tonight when dan siegel asked me to speak and we agreed I asked what is being asked of me what do they want me to talk about they said well tell Ron he has 30 minutes and what would he say to the progressive community in 30 minutes but don't forget to talk about coalition politics so I'm going to try to talk with you maybe 30 minutes I know that I was drawing late but I want to begin by talking about coalition politics and then that's moved to the moment let me indulge me for a moment as I try to walk you briefly through my own thought process that leads me to the conclusion that coalition politics the only hope that we have to bring sanity and changed to our communities to our nation into our world what brings us together in this room I believe very profoundly from the length and breadth of this country is not only the idealism and the enthusiasm and the courage to challenge insanity but what brings us together is that we share a set of politics and I believe in order to have a set of politics one has to have four things a value system upon which that set of politics is firmly rooted an analytical frame of reference a set of goals and objectives and finally a strategy that you seek to achieve those goals and objectives you

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achieve those goals and objectives you begin with values remember Martin Luther King before he died said the revolution must be a revolution of values your politics are rooted firmly in your belief system let me give you three examples of my own beliefs first every human being on the face of this earth every human being has the right to flower to grow and to function and realize that fullest and total potential as human beings another value simply stated says that life not money not bullets not bombs not property life is the most precious substance on the face of this earth a third value simply says that each of us must assume the responsibility for the world we see stated a different way we must all be responsible for the knowledge we have if we see and understand depression we must challenge it if we see and understand injustice we must challenge it we must be responsible for what we see now if you take those basic values that then becomes the basis upon which you establish an analysis because the first question what endangers life and inhibits

growth if each human being has the right to grow to their fullest potential and that life is a very precious substance what in danger that life and what inhibits growth racism inhibits life and impedes growth sexism inhibits life and impede

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growth sexism inhibits life and impede growth age chauvinism discrimination against sexual preference insensitivity to people in wheelchairs people who cannot see people who cannot hear these are all forms of how we deny human beings the opportunity to function my brother mentioned that he was one of the new for those of you in the Bay Area you remember back in the early 70s I used to give a speech I used to talk about redefining who the of America are if you take the definition that it anyone in our society whose role is defined limited by others whose opportunities are defined and limited by others and whose justice is meted out on the base of expediency and not truth in mercy good news for all black people in this room you don't have to be black to be treated like a in America if you apply that definition they're black Brown red yellow white women gay student peace old poor working-class this is a nation where the majority of people are and if ever unite we can bring change in this country but I'm getting ahead of my rap if you start with a set of values as I said and apply them to the world around you and ask those questions what inhibits the life of these people putting dangerous people acid rain and dangers life polluting the air including the water in dangers life labor practices that kill and destroy and be humanized in dangers

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and destroy and be humanized in dangers life nuclear weapons endanger life the mentality of war in dangers life militaristic interventionist foreign policies endanger life a set of human priorities that have us spending billions of dollars building a monument to military madness and denying us the capacity to address the human misery of people in the various forms that it is visited upon them in dangers life so once you start with a set of values one's belief system what we think ought to be right in the world we then look at our society to determine what are the factors that preclude that value from going forward then taking us to the third aspect of politics a plan a set of goals and objectives policies and programs and ideas that will move forward these values programs that will strike down for all time the vestiges of racism and sexism and age chauvinism and classism and prejudice against sexual preference insensitivity to human beings with a variety of problems as they attempt to confront life talk about new priorities new ways of solving the problems of unemployment and poverty and hunger and disease ways of rebuilding the cities to make their monuments to our brilliance and our genius and our sensitivities and not monuments to our madness challenging the nuclear arms race all of these things become goals and objectives that we attempt to achieve to implement our value system but then how do you get to coalition you have to have a strategy by which you seek to achieve those programs

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which you seek to achieve those programs those policies those ideas those objectives those goals coalition politics where all the various people who have been harmed by a system that reeks oppression by a system that advocates injustice by a system that threatens by a system that establishes a set of priorities that adversely impact the lives of millions of people so coalition politics is simply the convergence of people with mutual self-interest people don't move for your reasons they move for their own people don't move for my reasons they move for their own and so tonight what my speech is simply about is to help redefine what everybody self-interest is if you are one of the that I alluded to earlier then we have a common self interest in eradicated ISM in all of the forms that it is visited upon the people whether it's sexism or racism or whatever the Democratic Party has now decided uh-huh we will place a woman on the ticket and some people will say magnificent victory our job is done our response is you've only opened the door there are millions of people that have to rush through that door they're still out there who are not inside that process which leads me now to the main point that I want to make the sign says unite dump Reagan let me start with dump Reagan and then come to unite clearly we must get rid of this administration and it's not just Ronald Reagan the

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it's not just Ronald Reagan the personality we are not that naive and shallow in our understanding it is getting rid of a mentality a set of politics in this country that are dangerous and frightening understand our children would not forgive us if we do not rid them of this madness and this danger here is a mentality that seeks to achieve peace by preparing for war here's a mentality that caused an MX missile a peacekeeper when we all know it's only function is to destroy life at an awesome level here is a mentality that says Central America is in our backyard here is a mentality that says we must manipulate an exploit el salvador militarized honduras threaten nicaragua envy grenada get in bed with south africa here is an administration that means it makes a distinction between the good communist and the bad communist the good communists are the ones that can bomb us back the bad communists are the tiny little nations that we can bully with CIA monies and con trials and other things this kind of mentality has to be dumped there's no question about that it can and it will be done by the people because when the people stand out they can defeat Ronald Reagan he is not invincible this man can be defeated and so can his administration but here's my admonishment first I make a simple statement big turnout Reagan loses small turnout Reagan's people win

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loses small turnout Reagan's people win but this is my admonishment the only way that we would defeat Ronald Reagan is in unity but people cannot unify in a vacuum I hear the press and other people running around saying we better unify the defeat Reagan as if in some way you can unify with our purpose you have to unify with a purpose and there's unfinished business Jesse Jackson's campaigned rainbow coalition has for minority reports that we ought to make the cornerstone of the Democratic Party yes you've now a placed a sister on the national ticket that's eons of time overdue but understand this it wasn't so much that mine they are made a choice you know why the sisters on the ticket because women stood up without equivocation and clarity and said there will be a woman in 84 and it will be Geraldine Ferraro and who was it a woman at Geraldine Ferraro he had no decision and what I'm saying to you is we must now say to our brothers and sisters in the Democratic Party you must now speak with equal force and equal clarity on the issue of no first use of nuclear weapons let's talk about it for just a moment I've asked a question of the Pentagon the Soviet Union has publicly said they would embrace the policy of no first use why I can't this administration embrace that policy their response was because we don't want the Soviet Union to

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we don't want the Soviet Union to believe that under certain circumstances we would not strike them first now what that's saying brothers and sisters is that we have moved beyond deterrence to the development of a warfighting capability and as many of you heard me say before anyone who believes that we can fight survive and win a nuclear wars by definition certifiably mentally disturbed and so the Democratic Party the Democratic Party in my estimation has an obligation to go on record in opposition to the use of nuclear weaponry and if people could speak clearly about a woman on the ticket and who that woman could be and when what that should signal us is when you speak with clarity and with unity and with force the establishment has no other recourse but to deal with it and so one of the causes that we must champion now over these next several days and win lose or draw on the next several days go home and organize and local communities because remember politicians heard at home if you want to get to a politician it's not in Washington where you heard them you heard them at home and so if we lose here in seven days best places to come back but we have to challenge them on no first use of nuclear weaponry that endangers life that's an aspect of the coalition Obama is an equal opportunity destroyer it doesn't care what color you are what your sex is your religion what your sexual preference or whatever and if we can be equalized in the side of a bomb we damn well can organize in the spirit of peace secondly we must advocate that the Democratic Party embraced the minority

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Democratic Party embraced the minority report that calls for substantial reductions in American military budget when I went to Congress 1971 the American military budget was 70 summer I billion dollars ten years

later fiscal 1981 173 billion fiscal 82 218 billion fiscal 83 244 billion fiscal 84 265 billion in this year round Reagan asked the congress of the united states for 313 billion dollars and i sat in a house-senate conference just two weeks ago across the table from giant towers and he looked the house members in the eye and said not a dime less than two hundred ninety nine billion dollars for the military budget now for the Democratic Party to say we will only slow down the increase is an absurdity listen to this if you accept zero growth this fiscal year zero growth means that you accept all of the assumption of the Reagan budget last year but we've been reduced to auctioneers the president says I want 13.5 percent real growth then the kind of conservatives say well I'm willing to back down to seven point five percent real growth then the moderates say I want to go down below six percent real growth then the real liberals say well I'm for three or four percent real growth I said if you take it to zero you accept Reagan last year we ought to not be talking about real growth but real reduction and that's what this minority report call for

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how do you achieve real reduction first you take the policy position that our responsibility is to in the danger of nuclear war which means you stop the MX missile to b-1 bomber the Pershing missile the cruise missile the Trident missile if you say we don't need to spend money on redundant unnecessary wasteful weapon systems then why spend 40 billion dollars building 100 b1 bombers that will be obsolete before you build them where I built 200 more additional surface ships when we found out in the Falkland Islands that a ten-cent missile could knock out a multi-million dollar surface ship and that was Argentina considered a fourth-rate naval power suppose we were in a confrontation with the Soviet Union what a long low 600 surface ships mean then when they're not throwing Tencent missiles at us but very sophisticated forms of weaponry this is madness it's not necessary if you accept a position that a militaristic interventionist foreign policy is inappropriate then take all the money out for the rapid deployment force you don't need them what about the fact that your taxpayers dollars spent over a thousand dollars to buy a four dollar wrench several hundred dollars to buy a two dollar boat and we have to cut social programs and the Democratic Party's best position is we want to slow down the rate of growth that makes no sense third program that we must embrace as a minority plan affirmative action here we are in 1984 in America and we're still sitting down drawing artful words to define the nature of our relationship with each other we must take a very basic and fundamental and simplistic statement all

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fundamental and simplistic statement all human beings in this country should have the right to flower and function and grow and realize their fullest and total potential as human beings and the role of the government should be to guarantee those rights and to enforce those laws to the limit we should not have to sit around here talking about what should be affirmative action black and brown and red and yellow people have a right to grow women have a right to function gay and lesbian people have a right to be gay and lesbian we have to get beyond these archaic antiquated ancient ideas about what human beings ought to be like platitudes and morality that makes no sense we can moralize about the gay community but we don't moralize about invading grenada or building nuclear weapons that kill and threaten our children the fourth minority plant very simple the Voting Rights Act now understand that's controversial in a democratic society where voting ought to be the basic expression of people and they participate in the process but we have to now present a minority report to the floor of Congress to the floor of the convention my point is simply this a we must in Reagan's madness as I said our children not forgive us but the only way it will be done as if we unify and we can only unify when there is a purpose that means people's self-interest must be realized people must feel that there is something in it for them to unify and I'm saying to the women to all the rainbow coalition you can make the Democratic Party deal with a woman on the ticket then you can make the

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the ticket then you can make the Democratic Party in this country do anything you want them to do as long as you understand what you want to do and make the point with clarity and with force and with conviction and with unity again stop first use of nuclear weaponry stop the notion of increasing the military budget stop fees compromising words about affirmative action and no quotas I mean does that make any sense if we say that fifty percent of this country of women and women should be involved in fifty percent of all the business and that's quota they only have two people on the national ticket when they said want to be a woman that's quota so then when it come to black and fed well people or we don't want quotas me this is absurdity we have to make a clear and honest an unequivocal statement what I'm saying to all of you is that I appreciate all of you being here because it's uplifting to each of us in this room to know that we don't struggle alone and many of you have traveled several hundred miles some a few thousand miles just to come and experience the camaraderie and the Brotherhood and sisterhood of other people who understand the madness and who are still willing to struggle well let's continue you over the next several days to generate powerful ideas but also let some of your energy be heard as this other party generates its its activity over in San Francisco for those of you in this room who are members of the activists terminus community go to San Francisco and demand to meet with the feminist inside the Democratic Party and said let's talk about where we're going those of you who are activists in the peace movement in this room go to San Francisco asked to meet with the Peace caucus and talk about where the peace caucus and the Democratic Party is going to be on the issue of reducing the military budget and no first use those of you who are members of the farm labor activist community go to San Francisco and meet with the farm labor caucus meet

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and meet with the farm labor caucus meet with the brown caucus meet with the black caucus what I'm saying is that we must now begin to unfold the strategy of dialogue and communication you and I are advocates of peace you and I believe that talking and negotiating and face-to-face confrontation is better than war and violence and hostility so let's make it work when you finish the convention when you have clearly in your mind what the progressive agenda ought to be take it across the san francisco and demand that it be heard there are progressives inside the Democratic Party and progresses outside the Democratic Party the sister said some of you like Ron Dellums what have you someday you're a march out start another party maybe but at this particular moment we have to let our progressive ideas be known in the lonely solitude of a party where we are not in the majority and sometimes that's when the real courage of your convictions have to come out when you're not surrounded by everybody that thinks the way you think but when you're surrounded by people who don't think the way you think and you still talk about peace and job and justice and freedom and human dignity and the human spirit then that's when the coalition really makes sense I look around at Dan and some of the others dance a half thinning lines etched in our face hair turning white that many of us have been struggling for a long time but back 10 to 15 years ago Dan we thought we were running the hundred meters we thought we could change the world yesterday but as we get older we find out that it's not a sprint it's a marathon but understand this

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it's a marathon but understand this brothers and sisters as long as you willing to run there are some of us here willing to go that 26 miles 385 yards till we achieve freedom peace justice and dignity for the human spirit in the human condition and I join you another random Ron Dellums lived in denim rhondella you

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